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Item 111 (d) of the preliminary list*
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 28 February 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

With reference to my letter of 10 February, in which I informed you about Germany's candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period from 2013 to 2015 at the elections to take place later in 2012, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, I have the honour to submit herewith a specific set of pledges and commitments underscoring Germany's active engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights at the global, regional and local levels (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Peter **Wittig**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/67/50.

12-25393 (E) 120312

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Annex to the letter dated 28 February 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Germany to the Human Rights Council, 2013-2015

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The Federal Republic of Germany was a founding member of the Human Rights Council and had a seat on that body from 2006 to 2009. The Government of Germany is seeking re-election to the Council for the period 2013-2015.

2. Respect for human rights is of vital importance to the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany's Constitution, the Basic Law, begins by stating that human dignity shall be inviolable and then goes on to say that the German people acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community.

3. Germany is a party to the fundamental human rights conventions, which were incorporated into national law following their ratification. Germany has entered into extensive commitments on the protection of human rights and allows their implementation to be monitored at both the national and international levels.

4. The Government also feels that it has an obligation to strive to protect and foster respect for human rights throughout the world. It does this by conducting a critical dialogue, as well as by providing concrete support for projects aimed at improving human rights. Human rights and human rights principles are systematically taken into account in German development policy programmes and projects.

5. Protection and respect for human rights begins in one's own country. We regard this as a task which we have to tackle anew every day, and we have to allow ourselves to be judged by how well we do it.

6. The German Institute for Human Rights, established in March 2001, is Germany's independent national institute for human rights, as required by the Paris Principles, and monitors the Government's human rights activities closely and critically. The Government cultivates close contacts with civil society and engages in active discourse on human rights with it.

7. The Government regards its human rights policy as a cross-cutting task that affects all areas of society. The realization of article 3 of the Constitution, which states that men and women have equal rights, the implementation of the National Action Plan for a Child-Friendly Germany 2005-2010 and the Action Plan of the Federal Government to Combat Violence against Women, efforts to ensure equal opportunities and participation for people with a migrant background, as well as the preparation of the National Action Plan to Fight Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Related Intolerance, are just a few examples of the Government's ongoing commitment to improving the human rights situation.

8. The Federal Republic of Germany has been a committed supporter of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms since its establishment. It has issued a standing invitation to mandate holders under the Council's special procedures. It has been the initiator of three mandates of special rapporteurs. A German expert has

been on the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee since 2008, while another expert has held the post of special rapporteur since 2010.

9. In connection with its candidature to the Human Rights Council, the Government of Germany undertakes to:

(a) Continue to work for the universality and indivisibility of human rights;

(b) Continue to actively advance the implementation of its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international human rights conventions, the European Convention on Human Rights and other international and regional conventions;

(c) Fulfil its reporting obligations deriving from those conventions and cooperate in a spirit of mutual trust with the treaty bodies, disseminate the concluding remarks of the treaty bodies, examine how to implement them and report on the corresponding implementation steps;

(d) Continue its close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and carry on providing substantial support for its work;

(e) Work towards enabling the Human Rights Council to carry out in full its mandate under General Assembly resolution 60/251, by which the Council was established, and granting national institutions for human rights, within the meaning of the Paris Principles and civil society, their proper place in the Council;

(f) Pursue an active role in the Human Rights Council, in particular by continuing its sponsorship of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, and on trafficking in persons, especially women and children;

(g) Actively seek cooperation in the Human Rights Council on improving the protection of human rights beyond regional frontiers;

(h) Cooperate with the instruments and mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, in particular by upholding its standing invitation to the special rapporteurs and working actively on the universal periodic review.

10. At the national level, the Government undertakes to:

(a) Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2012 at the latest;

(b) Develop a national action plan to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the end of 2011 and involve civil society on a broad basis;

(c) Implement the 2011 Federal Government Action Plan to Protect Children and Youth from Sexual Violence and Exploitation and review its implementation through a monitoring procedure;

(d) Resolutely continue its efforts to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and related intolerance;

(e) Implement the Federal Government's Action Plan on Human Rights 2010-2012.

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Item 111 (d) of the preliminary list*
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 16 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, regarding the decision of the Government of Greece to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015 at the elections to be held in New York in 2012 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, has the honour to enclose the voluntary pledges and commitments of Greece in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations would be grateful if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

* A/67/50.

12-25758 (E) 130312

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Annex to the note verbale dated 16 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Candidature of Greece to the Human Rights Council, 2013-2015

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

International contribution, pledges and commitments

1. Greece has a long-standing commitment to the comprehensive protection of human rights at both the national and international levels. Greece believes that the United Nations plays a unique and vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights and recognizes the crucial role of the Human Rights Council in strengthening the ability of the United Nations to fulfil these responsibilities effectively.

2. Greece fervently supported the creation of an efficient Human Rights Council, equipped with a strong mandate, in order to set universal standards for the protection of human rights, prevent human rights violations, promptly respond to human rights emergencies and provide guidance and assistance to countries in need, with a view to attaining the highest standards of human rights protection. Greece believes that the Human Rights Council has proven to be the most suitable forum for the respect for and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, through extensive dialogue on thematic issues on all human rights and by its prompt reaction to human rights situations that require its attention.

3. Greece has always been a staunch supporter of all efforts to enhance international cooperation in the field of the protection of human rights. Being a party to almost all major relevant international instruments, Greece considers accountability for its actions to various international organizations in which it participates as a cornerstone for the effective protection of all human rights, through openness, transparency and international scrutiny.

4. Greece has ratified almost all of the core international human rights instruments. Greece will ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Moreover, Greece has recognized the competence of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to examine individual communications under the relevant instruments.

5. In the context of the submission of its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, Greece announces the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

- To actively participate in the work of the Council, in particular to contribute to the full implementation of its mandate, aiming at further strengthening its credibility and efficiency.

- To work and fully cooperate with all of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as the Council's special procedures, and to take into serious account their recommendations. The independence and high expertise of the special procedures mandate holders provide a unique framework for dialogue and cooperation. Greece has extended and maintains a standing invitation to all mandate holders under the special procedures and received visits by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2006, the Independent Expert on minority issues in 2008 and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in 2010.

- At an extremely challenging economic and financial juncture, to make every effort to maintain its voluntary contributions at meaningful levels.

- To promote the engagement of non-governmental organizations in the Council's work.

- To fully cooperate with the treaty monitoring bodies through the timely submission of its periodic reports and an appropriate follow-up to the recommendations made by those bodies.

- To fully engage with the universal periodic review mechanism and to ensure an effective follow-up to the universal periodic review recommendations.

- To contribute, through national development cooperation, to the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law and good governance in partner countries.

- To continue to contribute to the fight against racism, xenophobia, discrimination based on race and related intolerance, building on its experience from its active participation in the Durban Review Conference, in 2009.

- To ensure adequate and effective responses to human rights crises when they occur, guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, while promoting international dialogue and cooperation.

- To continue to promote dialogue and cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding as the primary means for protecting and strengthening human rights worldwide.

- To continue to give special emphasis to the strengthening of gender equality, the rights of women and the rights of the child.

- To continue to work for the universality and indivisibility of all human rights — civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. Greece will give particular attention to the relationship between human rights and poverty, sustainable development and environmental protection, equal opportunities, and access to essential natural resources (i.e. water), food, adequate shelter and sanitation services, and education, as instituted by the respective United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

National contribution, pledges and commitments

6. The Greek Constitution contains a comprehensive set of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights and freedoms, similar to those incorporated in the most important international and regional human rights treaties. It proclaims that respect for and protection of human dignity constitute a primary obligation of the State and guarantees the rights of persons as individuals and members of the society, as well as the principle of the "constitutional welfare state".

7. International treaties ratified by Greece become an integral part of domestic Greek law and may be invoked directly before the courts, prevailing over any contrary provision of the law. Domestic courts are bound not to apply any legislative or other provision that is contrary to an international treaty ratified by Greece, including human rights treaties.

8. The Greek legal order provides, at all levels, effective remedies against potential human rights violations. Every person enjoys the fundamental right to have recourse to courts in order to receive legal protection. All courts are under the obligation not to apply a law that is found to be contrary to the Constitution. There is also a comprehensive system designed for the protection of all persons against illegal acts or omissions committed by the Administration.

9. Independent authorities and national human rights institutions, based on the Constitution and/or ordinary legislation, cover wide and important sectors of the Administration, ensuring accountability within their respective spheres of competence. The Greek Ombudsman enjoys wide trust and confidence from both the public and the Administration, as evidenced by the constant flow of complaints by individuals and the constructive response of public authorities to the Ombudsman's recommendations. The National Commission for Human Rights, an "A" accredited national human rights institution established in accordance with the Paris Principles, has confirmed its position as a major actor in the promotion and protection of human rights, through its monitoring and consultative activities, and as a privileged partner in the drafting of legislation in the field of human rights.

10. The Greek authorities have adopted over the years a number of policies to protect and promote human rights and to prevent human rights violations. The Greek authorities are, however, fully aware of the need for a constant and sustained effort to improve the level of human rights protection and to respond to a number of challenges that remain to be addressed.

11. In particular, Greece commits itself:

- To continuing to implement the National Action Plan on Substantive Gender Equality, which focuses on the improvement, enhancement and implementation of the relevant legislative framework, on special policies for gender equality and on gender mainstreaming.
- To updating and reinforcing its domestic legislation on violence against women and to continuing to provide information and counselling services to victims, building upon existing best practices in this field.
- To stepping up its efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, through prosecution of the traffickers, protection of the victims, prevention and partnership among all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

- To taking all the necessary steps to address effectively issues affecting Roma, to developing a coordinated and holistic administrative intervention based on local synergies and intervention projects, with the participation of Greek Roma themselves, and to implementing educational programmes in order to enhance the access of Roma children to the educational structures of the State, with no exclusion or segregation.

- To ensuring accountability of law enforcement personnel, to reviewing in an effective manner and through appropriate structures allegations of ill treatment of individuals or violations of human dignity by police officers and to continuing to put a special emphasis on training of police personnel.

- To sparing no effort in dealing with the challenges arising from the unprecedented flow of irregular migrants entering its territory owing to its geographical position at the external borders of the European Union, bearing in mind the European dimension of the problem; and to continuing to implement the National Action Plan on Migration Management, which provides, inter alia, for the improvement of asylum procedures and the establishment of efficient screening procedures, with appropriate living conditions for those involved, in accordance with international standards.

- To further promoting consistent and efficient policies on legal migration, as well as measures and activities of third country nationals legally residing in Greece, through the National Strategy on Integration, aiming at the prevention of social exclusion, racism and xenophobia and the promotion of social cohesion.

- To continuing to implement and develop policies promoting the rights and ensuring the progress, prosperity and well-being of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace, in accordance with contemporary human rights norms and standards.

- To strengthening the fight against intolerance through an effective legislative framework and the implementation of awareness-raising and training activities addressed both to the general public and to public officials; and to updating and enhancing criminal legislation punishing incitement to acts or activities that may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals.

- To further promoting and reinforcing actions and initiatives in the field of human rights education and to addressing any instances of discrimination and stereotyping, particularly in the Greek schools.

- At a time of an extremely challenging economic and financial situation, to making every effort to mitigate the effects of the relevant policies on the more vulnerable groups of the population and establish adequate safety nets for the disadvantaged.

- To continuing to implement integrated actions for the protection of children's rights, and more specifically to unaccompanied minors, based on the paramount principle of safeguarding the best interests of the child.

- To promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and their equal participation in the economic, social and political life of the country.

12. Civil society is regularly consulted in the formulation of policies and the drafting of legislation in the field of human rights. Draft laws or even policy initiatives by the Government are posted on the Internet in a blog-like platform prior to their submission to Parliament. Individuals and organizations can post their comments, suggestions and criticisms article by article. The National Commission for Human Rights, whose membership includes six major non-governmental organizations, submits consultative opinions on draft legislation related to the protection of human rights, as well as on national human rights reports to international bodies. Civil society was fully involved, in an open and transparent manner, in the preparation of Greece's universal periodic review report, which was recently examined. Greece commits itself to fully involving civil society in the formulation and implementation of domestic human rights policy and programmes.

13. Greece will continue to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights at both the international and national levels.

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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: elections of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 10 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the Argentine Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the General Assembly Affairs Branch and, with regard to the note dated 18 September 2009, has the honour to transmit the statement of Argentina's voluntary pledges and commitments (see annex), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

* A/67/50.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 10 January 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Candidacy of Argentina to the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015 — voluntary pledges and commitments

I. Argentina and the promotion and protection of human rights

Argentina has submitted its candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015, in the context of the elections that will be held in the United Nations General Assembly in May 2012.

Since the restoration of democracy, and in particular since 2003, the promotion and protection of human rights is a Government policy that reflects the principle demands of Argentine society. The protection and promotion of those rights therefore constitutes the central aim of our country's foreign policy.

The Argentine Constitution provides for a democratic and pluralistic society whose central aim is the unrestricted respect for human rights. Its pillars include absolute equality in the enjoyment of those rights by all its inhabitants, whether nationals or foreigners, the principle of non-discrimination and the separation of powers. In 1994, with the reform of the Constitution, the commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights was enhanced by incorporating, with constitutional rank, the major instruments of international law and human rights, including: the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; all of which, under their own terms, should be understood as complementary to the rights and guarantees recognized in the Constitution.

Act No. 25778 likewise gave constitutional rank to the Convention on the Non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity. Act No. 24820 gave constitutional rank as well to the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Argentina has recently established the basis for implementation of a Federal Plan on Human Rights, consisting of an assessment of the current status of their development in the country, based on which the major areas for strategic action in the medium and long term will be determined. This plan is made up of a range of measures leading to the systematization, further development and consolidation of human rights by working towards consensus and the participation of various social actors. A Federal Anti-Discrimination Plan has also been implemented since 2005, which contains an in-depth diagnosis of the problem and establishes a workplan in

addition to offering specific recommendations. Our country has thus become a model for the development of similar plans in other countries.

Argentina has placed particular emphasis on the progressive incorporation of the practices and norms of international human rights standards. The following legislation can be mentioned by way of example.

In 2004, the passage of the new Migration Act No. 25871 repealed the laws of the last de facto Government and established principles under the Constitution and international human rights treaties. The regulations for the Act (Presidential Decree 616/2010) consolidated the approach of the policy of non-discrimination towards migrants. Argentina thus implemented two special programmes for regularization of documentation: a programme intended for immigrants from outside the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the "National Programme for Regularization of Immigration Documentation (the Greater Homeland Programme — *Patria Grande*)" for immigrants from countries that are full members and associate members of MERCOSUR, through which 420,000 people have registered to obtain legal residence status. This is in keeping with the belief that a migration policy that facilitates access to legal residence for immigrants is key to obtaining a job under decent conditions both for workers coming into Argentina and for Argentine citizens moving throughout South America.

Decree No. 1602 of 2009 established the Child Allowance, which is currently reaching over 3,600,000 children and adolescents from birth to age 18. Likewise, by Presidential Decree No. 446/011 the Pregnancy Allowance for Social Protection was created for pregnant women from the third month of gestation who are unemployed or are employed as domestic workers or in the informal economy.

Those allowances expand the foundations of the Argentine social protection system, thereby allowing policies aimed at social protection to mesh with the active employment policies developed by the Employment Secretariat of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

Another example of the progressive strengthening of fundamental rights is the adoption of the Mental Health Act No. 26657 of 25 November 2010, which takes a human rights approach; its main aim is deinstitutionalization, rehabilitation and reintegration of patients into the community. As for the budget allocation for mental health, article 32 of the Act states: "in a progressive manner and no more than three (3) years from the adoption of this Act, the Executive Branch shall include in the proposed budget an increase in the funds allocated to mental health in order to reach a minimum of ten per cent (10%) of the total budget for health."

In September 2011 the National Chamber of Deputies approved the bill on a national mechanism for the prevention of torture. This approval represents a very important step on Argentina's road towards compliance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The recent adoption of the Marriage Equality Act made our country the first in Latin America and the tenth in the world to allow marriages between persons of the same sex to be performed throughout its territory. Our leadership, recognized at the global level, symbolizes a calling to equality that provides a remedy for an unsustainable situation of discrimination.

On 30 November 2011 another step was taken towards equal rights and the fight against discrimination when the bill on gender identity obtained approval in the National Chamber of Deputies. It has been adopted by one house of the legislature; the National Senate will debate the bill at its next session.

On the regional and international levels, Argentina has promoted and participated actively in the negotiation of instruments for the protection of human rights. During 2011, with the ratification of the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, our country has completed the ratification of all the most relevant human rights instruments of the international and regional systems. This action is part of a foreign policy aimed at strengthening international law, cooperation, promotion of universal values associated with peace and security, representative democracy and respect and promotion of human rights, both economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights.

In compliance with the recommendation made during the universal periodic review, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol were ratified in 2008.

With respect to the human rights treaty monitoring bodies, Argentina has met its obligations for the submission of periodic reports to the monitoring bodies (committees), as well as those related to the system of individual communications. On this point, it should be recalled that our country recognized the jurisdiction of the Committees to analyse the complaints of persons who allege that they have been victims of violations of the rights guaranteed by those treaties (Human Rights Committee, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Committee against Torture and Committee on Enforced Disappearances). Argentina has submitted all periodic reports to the various monitoring bodies.

The path followed by Argentina since 1983, and especially the decided impetus given beginning in 2003 with the Governments of Presidents Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in combating impunity and the struggle to guarantee and protect human rights has placed our country in a position of global leadership in building a more just international order, which is one of the major comparative advantages of its political position in the world.

It is essential to note that the road Argentina has travelled is a result of the untiring work of local human rights bodies, which, under the motto "truth, justice and remembrance", have never ceased to demand from the State the proper functioning of democratic institutions, promoting, through their role as civil society, public policy proposals that observed international standards of human rights protection.

The development of the right to the truth, Argentina's initiatives for the prevention of mass violation of human rights in the world and the proposals relating to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances are succinct examples of those areas where Argentina is clearly a world leader.

The responses offered by Argentina at the domestic level in combating impunity and the demands for truth, justice and reparation for the victims of grave

violations of human rights during the last military dictatorship represent fundamental pillars of the integral human rights policy of the Argentine Government.

Because of its experience and history and the commitments it has made, one issue of particular importance to Argentina is the punishment of crimes against humanity and the prevention of genocide. In that regard, Argentina participated actively in the establishment of the International Criminal Court and also collaborated firmly in the establishment of mechanisms for the prevention of genocide, through the holding of regional forums.

Argentina firmly believes in the need to continue to strengthen the universal system for the promotion and protection of human rights. It therefore wishes to make a definite contribution at this stage of the consolidation of the Human Rights Council, which will assist it in continuing to improve international levels of protection.

II. Activities of Argentina in the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights

Within the United Nations, Argentina was a member of the Commission on Human Rights during the following periods: 1957-1962, 1966-1968 and 1980-1993. It held continuous membership starting in 1997 and was re-elected in May 2005, until the establishment of the Human Rights Council, of which it was a member for one year, thereby promoting rotation of its membership.

It should be noted that our country has collaborated closely with all special procedures of the Human Rights Council. It has received visits from various Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups on the promotion and protection of human rights and supports initiatives for the renewal of existing mandates and the establishment of new ones.

On the other hand, Argentina has presented various innovative draft resolutions to the Council, in particular introducing on the international agenda the topic of "the right to the truth". The development of this right centres on the prevention of mass human rights violations in the world. In addition, since 2009 it has submitted initiatives on forensic genetics and human rights, placing our country in a position of international leadership on that issue.

The recent establishment of a new thematic mandate, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees on non-recurrence, should also be highlighted. This initiative was submitted jointly with Switzerland, Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire and France among its main sponsors.

Activities related to the universal adherence to the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which entered into force on 23 December 2010, and under which Argentina also accepted the jurisdiction of the Committee on Enforced Disappearance, make up a central element of our country's foreign policy, along with efforts in the OAS and United Nations General Assembly towards the elaboration of a convention on the protection of the rights of older persons.

Argentina supports and works actively in forums for promotion and protection of human rights for the adoption of various resolutions, for instance "Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity", which addresses the decriminalization of homosexuality, among other issues; "Protection of human rights in the context of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)". Argentina also co-sponsored the traditional event on "Human rights and sexual orientation", designed to promote and raise the visibility of the issue within the United Nations, and is a member of the "core group" of organizing countries. At the latest panel discussion, held in New York, Argentina was cited among cases where there had been positive developments in that area.

With respect to the universal periodic review, Argentina supports this mechanism and considers it a significant and objective tool of the universal system for the promotion and protection of human rights. Along those lines, all rights, both civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights, should be given equal importance, including the right to development.

As an example of its commitment to follow up on the recommendations made by States in the context of the universal periodic review, at the fifteenth session of the Council (September 2010), our country voluntarily submitted an advance report on compliance with the recommendations made to Argentina, which summarizes briefly in a table the actions taken to date to comply with the recommendations of the Working Group, as one more sign of its support for this mechanism.

III. Activities of Argentina in the regional system for promotion and protection of human rights

Argentina actively participates in all negotiations on human rights conducted in the Organization of American States and is in constant dialogue with the States of the region.

Furthermore, as with United Nations mechanisms, Argentina maintains a standing invitation to the organs of the inter-American human rights system to visit the country. Additionally, it recognizes the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to receive complaints against the Argentine Government for violations of the human rights contained in the American Convention on Human Rights.

In this context, a Special Session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was held in Buenos Aires in 2009 at the invitation of the Argentine Government to mark the anniversaries of the establishment of the Commission (1959) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (1979) and the historic visit by the Commission to our country in 1979.

The recent adoption at the forty-first General Assembly of the OAS of resolutions on "Right to the Truth", "Older Persons and Human Rights", "Protection of Applicants for Refugee Status in the Americas" and "Access to Justice: the role of official public defenders" should also be noted. These were all initiatives by our country.

IV. Commitments by Argentina during its term of membership

Hoping that it can count on broad support among Member States, Argentina undertakes to:

At the international level

- Strengthen the promotion and protection of all human rights, both civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural, in accordance with the principles of universality, interdependence and indivisibility
- Promote multilateralism as an effective tool for the defence of human rights, submitting and co-sponsoring resolutions in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council that will help to raise international standards for human rights protection
- Work with all organizations of civil society through interactive dialogue, developing new forums to increase mechanisms for their participation in the Council and recognizing their role as promoters of human rights
- Build the Council's capacity for effective action in emergency situations of grave violations of human rights and country mandates
- Endorse the commitment to discourage, during diplomatic consultations, such practices as the "no action motion" on a particular draft resolution. In a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, Council members must be prepared to consider all issues having to do with the promotion and protection of human rights, in due observance of General Assembly resolution 60/251
- Support the strengthening and independence of special procedures, guaranteeing full freedom of action to mandate holders. The special procedures should consider in a balanced manner the effect of all human rights, both economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political, including the right to development
- Continue supporting the work of the Office of the High Commissioner and its mechanisms, attempting to increase its participation in the work of the Council
- Participate constructively in giving the universal periodic review greater capacity for transformation, providing technical cooperation for all States that require it. When making its recommendations, the review should take into account the different levels of development of the countries being evaluated, along with a gender perspective
- Continue efforts to achieve the full effect and observance of the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by all States

At the regional level

- Continue to promote dialogue and cooperation among the States of the region in order to contribute to the strengthening of human rights and bring a constructive view and spirit of consensus to the Council
- Cooperate in strengthening democracy in the region, guaranteeing full respect for human rights

- Continue to participate actively in the Working Group on protection of the human rights of older persons, whose work centres on the protection of the rights of the elderly, within the OAS

At the national level

- Continue the full implementation at the domestic level of the obligations undertaken by Argentina through international human rights instruments
- Continue and expand the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level as a Government policy, based on the strong belief that they represent rights inherent to all persons
- Continue to combat impunity through the implementation of policies aimed at achieving truth, justice, remembrance and reparation
- Work together with civil society and non-governmental organizations to promote public policies that guarantee respect for human rights
- Adopt a gender perspective in the follow-up to the universal periodic review
- Include factors concerning the fight against discrimination in all its forms and gender violence in the universal periodic review

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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 22 February 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that in July 2009 the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela submitted its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council in the elections to be held in 2012 for the period 2013-2015.

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would be grateful if its candidature could be included in the preparations for this election, and would suggest that it be included in the programme of work under the agenda item "Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council".

In that regard, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to transmit herewith its written statement of voluntary pledges and commitments for the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 (see annex). It would be grateful if it could be circulated to the Member States of the United Nations.

(*Signed*) Jorge **Valero**
Ambassador

* A/67/50.

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Candidature of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Human Rights Council

2013-2015

Voluntary pledges and commitments made by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

General actions taken by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the promotion, respect for, protection and realization of human rights

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a democratic and social State that respects rights and justice. Its Political Constitution is a recent innovation and has been recognized as one of the most advanced constitutions in the world. The Venezuelan Constitution provides full guarantees of human rights. Through its participative and proactive democracy and a broad-based and pluralistic exchange of ideas, the Government has been implementing policies to achieve social, economic and cultural equality as well as the exercise of civil and political rights. Thus, through both its legislation and concrete activities, the Venezuelan Government aims to ensure that the concept of universal and indivisible human rights is respected, promoted, fulfilled and understood.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the introduction of the universal periodic review mechanism into its innovative institutional practices. It underwent the universal periodic review on 7 October 2011; the preparation for this exercise was a thorough, pluralistic and continuous process. In Venezuela, the universal periodic review was and is a fundamentally grass-roots effort to raise awareness of all human rights. It has become a cross-cutting element of public policy which is subject to evaluation and monitoring by the people in order to ensure that human rights are respected, promoted and realized.

An intra- and inter-institutional working group, which included representatives from all Government bodies, was convened to draft the first national report on the universal periodic review. This process involved extensive social consultations, which in turn led to the establishment of permanent national agencies for human rights training, an initiative that included the participation of civil society organizations, community councils and non-governmental organizations. This experience is complemented by an ongoing effort to submit updated reports on implementation of human rights conventions and protocols that have been ratified to the relevant treaty bodies; Venezuela has submitted or will submit all such reports by July 2012. In addition, the universal periodic review process resulted in the development of the website www.epuvenezuela.gob.ve, an outlet for transparent information on human rights in Venezuela.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has made great strides in the area of development and quality of life; over the past 12 years, poverty and inequality levels in the country have decreased. The implementation of public policies aimed at eradicating poverty is based on the principles of universality, free access, equality, inclusiveness, solidarity, equity and social justice. Public programmes have

resoundingly manifested those principles by empowering girls, boys, adolescents, women, persons with disabilities and older persons.

In addition, a system that genuinely protects indigenous peoples and people of African descent has been developed, which recognizes their contributions, as indigenous Venezuelans and Afro-Venezuelans, to shaping our identity as well as the contributions of their basic social institutions. This system is complemented by mechanisms for political participation at every level, which guarantee that indigenous peoples will always have representation within the National Assembly. The Venezuelan Government is part of an international trend to seek constitutional recognition of the specific rights of indigenous peoples as the original occupants of a country in the Constitution, and to acknowledge the multi-ethnic, pluricultural and multilingual nature of our society.

The Venezuelan Government's achievements in the area of human rights are evident in changes in indicators, such as the decrease in the percentage of households living in extreme poverty, which dropped from 21 per cent in 1998 to 7.1 per cent in 2010. Thanks to its effective social justice policy, the Venezuelan Government has successfully met Millennium Development Goal 1, which is to halve the number of households living in extreme poverty. Over the past 10 years, Venezuela has made social investments amounting to more than $400 billion.

With regard to social rights, it is important to note that the health policies developed by the Venezuelan Government are guided by the principles of universality, equality, free access, participation, and multi-ethnic and pluricultural sensitivity. In 2003, a plan called "Misión Barrio Adentro" (Inner-City Mission) was established to offer citizens basic health care free of charge. Thanks to this programme, 24 million Venezuelans, or slightly more than 80 per cent of the population, access services in a total of 13,510 public health centres; this figure is even higher if centres offering specialized health services are taken into account.

In the area of civil rights, the Venezuelan Government guarantees the inviolability of the right to life throughout the life cycle as the basis of the enjoyment and exercise of all other rights, including by explicitly prohibiting the death penalty. The increased protection of this right now begins from the moment of conception and extends through the gestational cycle; while maternal and infant health and the comprehensive development of the person are also taken into account. This has led to a decrease in the infant mortality rate, which was at 13.9 per 1,000 live births in 2008, and an increase in life expectancy, which is currently 73.94 years.

With respect to access to justice, in order to ensure respect for human rights, the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela fully guarantees judicial mechanisms and mechanisms for the investigation and resolution of proceedings. An outstanding example of such mechanisms is the constitutional protection measure (*amparo constitucional*). The jurisprudence relating to this measure is solid evidence of its appropriateness and effectiveness in protecting human rights. Guarantees have been further enhanced by strengthening of the Attorney-General's Office and police investigative authorities and the establishment of the Bolivarian National Police.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela notes that it is a party to the following international human rights instruments:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In addition, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuelan recently signed the following international human rights instruments:

- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1 July 2011);
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (4 October 2011);
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (4 October 2011).

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the universal system for the promotion and protection of human rights, has the honour to share its pledges and commitments in respect of its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015.

1. At the international level

To cooperate with the Human Rights Council, its special procedures and mechanisms of the universal system of promotion and protection of human rights

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to greater cooperation with the Council, in order to strengthen its role as a transparent, efficient and objective body that remains true to the founding human rights principles, contributing to the promotion and protection of all human rights, including the right to development.

Venezuela considers the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council to be the cornerstone of the universal system of promotion and protection of human

rights. It is open to genuine and constructive dialogue with the special rapporteurs, independent experts and special representatives of thematic procedures who adhere to impartiality and objectivity as principles rather than a means to merge and further restrict the mandates granted by the States, since great value is placed on the advocacy and cooperation efforts those individuals undertake to help overcome human rights shortcomings or harsh realities, as necessary, and with the utmost respect for the sovereignty and independence of States.

To contribute to international efforts for human rights promotion and protection through human resources and technical and financial support

Venezuela has contributed voluntarily to the financing of the promotion and protection of human rights at the international level, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, specifically the Committee against Torture, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Committee of the Red Cross, Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Trust Fund on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Trust Fund for Publicity against Apartheid, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the UNESCO World Heritage Fund.

To coordinate with the United Nations Office in Venezuela and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The joint technical assistance provided by the United Nations Office in Venezuela and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been vital. A human rights institution-building project is currently under way, as part of an agreement to promote, protect and enforce all human rights, with its focus in the medium term on promoting a comprehensive system for the ongoing and timely preparation of specific reports.

To monitor commitments under the treaty-based bodies and the universal periodic review

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to meeting its obligations under the international human rights covenants and conventions. In that regard, a systematic policy has been designed to respond efficiently to and follow up on periodic reports for the treaty-based bodies and the universal periodic review. It aims to implement a system of analysis and timely preparation of reports for submission to the treaty bodies.

Before July 2012, Venezuela will submit its third report under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; its nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first consolidated report under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; its fourth report under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and, its third, fourth and fifth report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all of which are in the process of review for submission to the relevant committees.

In addition, on 5 July 2011, the Venezuelan Government officially transmitted to the secretariat of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the initial report by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the initial report by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The common core document, which forms an integral part of the reports by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was also submitted on the same date.

2. At the regional level

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supports the far-reaching reform process that must take place within the inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights, as the System suffers from a lack of transparency and objectivity. That process seeks to ensure that the inter-American system will no longer be an institution for selective action, double standards and disrespect for the sovereignty of some member States.

Venezuela also notes with great interest and will definitively contribute to the new concepts of the relationships with and between Latin American and Caribbean States in the field of human rights, which includes promoting a regional geopolitical bloc, with agendas and working methods based on a Latin American and Caribbean vision, without the imposition of the international agenda of any Power or blocs outside the region. Those relationships will be based on cooperation, complementarity, solidarity, dealings among equals and respect for sovereignty to ensure the balance of power between regional blocs and neighbouring countries and to create multiple polarities. Examples of this concept of international relations include the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America — Peoples' Trade Agreement (ALBA-TCP), Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

This new vision is gradually extending to important topics on the international agenda, including human rights, which have been discussed in these regional forums and are expected to be defined in the medium term.

In that regard, the new systems for the unity and integration of peoples have reiterated their commitment to the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. The countries of the region have suggested sharing national experiences of preparing and presenting reports to the universal periodic review mechanism as an effective instrument for the consideration and promotion of human rights in all countries on equal terms, according to the commitments of each country. Venezuela is committed to working to preserve the integrity, objectivity and balance of this mechanism. All these declarations take into account respect for diversity and the cultural identity of the peoples of the region.

3. At the national level

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela pledges to undertake the following initiatives during its membership in the Human Rights Council:

- To continue to increase the visibility of human rights as a cross-cutting theme for all public policies aimed at the promotion of and respect for human rights at all levels of government, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the duly ratified international human rights treaties and conventions

- The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considers the right to development to be an inalienable human right, by virtue of which every human being and all peoples are entitled to participate in an economic, social, cultural, civil and political development that allows them to exercise fully all human rights and fundamental freedoms; to contribute to that development and to its enjoyment. Therefore, the Venezuelan Government is committed to the ongoing implementation and development of social programmes, designed by the national Government and known as "social missions", which seek to recognize and enforce the rights of the population in the fields of health, employment, education, food, social assistance, scientific and technological development and public safety

- To promote dissemination of the new Organic Law against Racial Discrimination and help establish the institute against racial discrimination that the Law provides for, all of which will contribute to the revitalization of the spirit and principles contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, adopted in Durban in 2001

- To promote the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, taking into account the great importance that the Venezuelan Government attaches to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples

- To strengthen procedures to ensure the exercise of the right to individual and collective property, as well as regularizing rural and urban land tenure

- To update the information collected in the census of communities of indigenous and African descent and of persons with disabilities, and ensure that the groups themselves participate in the process, with a view to strengthening public policies in these population groups

- To promote, disseminate and raise awareness in society of the rights of persons with visual disabilities by promoting widespread use of the Braille system in order to guarantee their right to information

- To strengthen migration policies, adopting a human rights approach

- To design a platform entitled "National System of Human Rights Indicators" as an appropriate mechanism for monitoring progress and challenges in implementing economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights. In that regard, the valuable collaboration of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will be taken into account

- To further develop and continue to implement the various human rights education programmes, whose purpose is the comprehensive development of the human being, drawing on the valuable sharing of experiences with other States and relevant institutions within the United Nations system

- To further enhance the protection of human rights within the Venezuelan correctional system through days devoted to addressing the human needs of the prison population throughout the country, including health care, legal advice, elimination of trial delays, and review and follow-up on case files, all areas that must be taken into account to ensure the coexistence with dignity of the population serving a prison sentence

- Before the end of 2012, to deposit the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, thereby complementing the very recent legislation in force that addresses services and support for this particular social group

- To facilitate and increase access to the system of administration of justice, not merely its aspect that pertains to legal proceedings, but as the basis for a much-needed public policy of inclusion, aiming at the creation and establishment of new social jurisdictions defined by immediacy as a principle that marks a break with the paradigm of the written trial and the excessive formalism that renders it impersonal. The Venezuelan Government will thus guarantee each person's right of access to the courts to defend his or her individual and collective rights and interests, in addition to protection of those rights and interests, free of charge. In order effectively to ensure this right, the Judiciary will pursue the ongoing restructuring, assessment and training process that has yielded 1,910 judges to date, which amounts to 6.6 judges per 100,000 citizens

- To intensify efforts to reform the police force and combat insecurity, illegal weapons trafficking and the illegal sale of narcotics, with the guiding concept of civic security as a human right, thereby reaffirming respect for integrity and life. The successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan on Civic Prevention and Security, under which the following plans and programmes have been carried out, will continue: (i) the establishment of the National Prevention System; (ii) the establishment of the integrated police system; (iii) the formation of the Bolivarian National Police, whose role comes within the context of strengthening constitutional and human rights principles in accordance with international treaties and covenants; (iv) the transformation of state and municipal police forces; (v) the gradual consolidation of the criminal justice system and other legislative reforms; (vi) the fight against illegal drug trafficking; and (vii) the plan to humanize the correctional system. With the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan on Civic Prevention and Security, the National Experimental University on Security has produced 4,222 graduates who have been successfully integrated into the Bolivarian National Police, thus meeting the international standard for police coverage rates: "*3.6 police officers per 1,000 inhabitants*"

- To undertake the necessary action to protect freedom of expression and opinion, in accordance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, further developing the establishment of governing and regulatory bodies in this area, and enacting laws that, in the dissemination and reception of messages, establish the social responsibility of radio and television service providers, electronic media providers, announcers, independent national producers and users, in order to foster a democratic balance between duties, rights and interests, thereby promoting social justice

and contributing to the development of citizenship, democracy, peace, human rights and the social and economic development of the nation

- To continue to strengthen mechanisms for civic participation in public affairs and the right to vote, which has resulted in significant changes in electoral practice, encompassing everything from the concept of suffrage as a right to the institution of new forms of political, social and economic participation. Since the entry into force of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Venezuelan society has witnessed an ongoing evolution in the exercise of political rights, driven by the active participation of the people. Beyond the election of public officials, this participation is expressed through the implementation of innovative political activities, including referendums, community opinion polls, abrogation of mandates, legislative, constitutional and constituent initiatives, town meetings, and citizen assemblies, whose decisions are binding. Together with the election of public officials, they reinforce the guarantee of active participation by the people in exercise of its sovereignty

- To establish electoral authority, as stipulated in the 1999 Constitution, with the aim of granting priority to the principle of active participation that underpins Venezuelan democracy. The exercise of this authority falls to the National Electoral Council, which is promoting a new electoral model, one based on suffrage as a right and according to which new forms of participation that go beyond the mere voting process are taking shape. The Venezuelan people's participation in 15 electoral processes between 1999 and 2010 is worth highlighting, as it demonstrates democratic purpose and reaffirms sovereignty and self-determination as exercised through free, direct, secret and universal suffrage. These electoral processes provide a clear indication of the plurality and the full exercise of political freedoms that Venezuelans enjoy, freedoms unprecedented in the history of the Republic